

FAIR ISLE BIRD OBSERVATORY BULLETIN



Edited by
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Director

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E D I T O R I A L

The purpose of having an Editorial in this Bulletin, during the migration seasons at any rate, is to provide space in which an attempt can be made to bind the scattered observations together; or, in other words, create an opportunity for us to air our views on "drift"! The spring of 1953 has rather let us down; but it would be ungracious to grumble, since it is clear that the summer has come to the rescue in a quite unexpected fashion (para. 128). A few reflections on the spring period, however, may not be out of place.

Great Saltee had a wonderful time (para. 129), and Friends who are aware of the energy and tenacity of purpose which Major Ruttledge has displayed in his efforts to found and maintain an Irish Bird Observatory will be glad for his sake. Fair Isle, on the other hand, had the poorest spring season since our observations began, and a "busman's holiday" in the Faeroe Islands (which was partly designed to forge a link between the two places) was therefore less exciting than it might have been. Some identity in the records is apparent and provides evidence of migration due to the accident of "drift" from European shores. In particular there is the mid-May period, when Willow Warblers and Lesser Whitethroats reached Fair Isle and Nolsoy on the same day, 16th, and other summer visitors appeared at one or two days' intervals - intervals probably due as

much to the accident of observation as to any discrepancy in time of arrival. Among these migrants were Swallow, the two martins, Redstart, Garden Warbler and Red-Spotted Bluethroat. From 17th-19th passage of hirundines continued (also on 22nd-23rd) and both places had one or two flycatchers. Other instances of close agreement in arrival times could be cited, for example the movement of thrushes at the end of April.

Why were these May movements so thin and shadowy in 1953, when in previous seasons we have counted our Willow Warblers, Redstarts and even Tree Pipits in hundreds, and our White-throats by the score? The conditions which brought migrants to Fair Isle and Faeroe this year were cyclonic, - that is to say, the "drift" off the Continental shores and across the North Sea took place in the easterly winds of the northern half of a depression; whereas the really spectacular "rushes" of former years were associated with col situations in middle Europe. It may be that col weather, which has much in common with anticyclonic weather (clear skies, little wind) stimulates a far greater mass of migratory birds; and whilst the easterly air-flow of the more northerly high of the pair responsible for the col pours the birds in full flood across the sea, the cyclonic situation merely brushes the outer fringe of the main movement and brings us very little.

Whatever the explanation, the records show that what we want (and the birds do not want) is an extensive European col in May, and a first-class polar anticyclone - preferably assisted by the Siberian High - in autumn.

128. The Crossbill Irruption of 1953.

KENNETH WILLIAMSON.

Undoubtedly the event of the summer in the northern isles has been the "irruption" of Common Crossbills Loxia c. curvirostra from the Continent, - the first invasion of this species on any scale since 1936. Equally there can be little doubt that the movement is attributable to the marked activity of the Continental polar high in north-western Europe during June and early July.

The following note constitutes a preliminary account of their appearance here and in Shetland: it is in no sense an attempt at an analysis of the invasion, which would be premature until more is known about their distribution in both space and time. The Crossbills are still here, and Continental polar highs - once they are well established - have a habit of asserting themselves for a considerable time. There may yet be more Crossbills to come.

June 14th appears to be the first date on which any were seen, George Stout of Field finding two birds on moorland above the Bird Observatory. A small flock of unidentified birds with an entirely unfamiliar call-note flitted past me in heavy mist on the following day; but I came upon them in similar conditions on 16th, and found they were nine Crossbills, of which one was an adult male. At least one other red male was seen, and on 17th two red males together in addition to the flock of nine.

At this period there was a good deal of mist, often dense, and the poor visibility prevented a

satisfactory search of the hillground. Meanwhile, Mrs. A.W. Thom, who came into the isle on 17th, has seen a small party at Boddan in Dunrossness the previous day. A female and two juveniles appeared in the Venables' garden on 16th, and on the same day two birds were seen on the isle of Noss. On 17th there were a few at Scousburgh, and L.S.V. Venables heard several birds far down on the cliffs of Fitful Head on the following day.

June 18th at Fair Isle began with a light mist which quickly cleared and gave way to bright sunshine, so that a quest for Crossbills, with some hope of accurately estimating their numbers, could be made. We found a flock of forty on Burrashield, 7 or 8 of these being adult male birds. Although we think this flock passed on (since it was not to be found on 19th), Burrashield remained the Crossbills' headquarters until early July. On 19th only 4 adult males and a female could be located and these - conveniently - were right in the mouth of the Vaadal trap.

Next day the only birds were a dozen or so in the Gully in the early morning, - of these we caught four, - and over the next few days only half this number could be found on the isle.

There was a definite influx on 24th, 35 birds (including 8 males in scarlet plumage) being seen on Burrashield, in addition to a new party of 12 in the North Haven area. Next day Burrashield had a total of 63 birds, and there was a similar number on 28th after three intervening days of heavy mist. Another increase

took place on 29th, when the Burrashield flock was over 120 strong, and a new lot of 40 was present near the Golden Water in the north of the isle. There appeared to be little change in these areas on 30th.

The northern flock, of over 40 birds, was examined closely on July 1st and about a quarter were adult males. On 2nd the flocks counted at various points totalled about 140 birds, and there were certainly 150 plus on 4th, so it is unlikely that any marked change had occurred.

In one flock of 50 birds that day, feeding on the southern slope of Burrashield, our one and only Two-barred Crossbill Loxia leucoptera to date was recognised. It was an adult female and the white bars on median and greater coverts were strikingly noticeable in contrast with the plain wings of the "commoners" surrounding it: there was no white on the tips of the tertials, but these, presumably, would have been lost by abrasion at this season.

This peak invasion appears to have passed on southwards that night and 40 or so on the Vaasetter moorland, with a meagre half-dozen at Burrashield, remained. More were expected however when rain came suddenly with a SE. wind late in the day, and July 6th will certainly be remembered as a "Crossbill Day" at Fair Isle! The newcomers, fortunately, chose the Gully area as their headquarters; they were much less wild than the Burrashield birds had been, and they contained fewer adult males. Their numbers were not large, 50 or 60 birds, but there was a constant succession of captures in the Gully and Double-Dyke Traps. The highlight came at dusk when part

of the flock sought roosting-places at the entrance to the Gully Trap, with the consequence that 16 were caught to bring the day's total to 32. They were given clean, dry beds in the lab., and the additional service that all their parasites were removed! The flock of 50 or more birds remains in the area bounded by Vaasetter, Byerwil and Vaadal, and in all 58 birds have now been trapped, ringed and examined in the lab.

There have been further reports from Shetland. Venables writes: "I was at Kergord Plantations today (June 21st): saw only two juv. Crossbills, but Mrs. Winton said there was a large flock a few days ago containing several red-birds". They have been seen at Lerwick and Scalloway, and more have appeared in Dunrossness. John Peterson and G.T. Kay saw more than a score in Dr. Saxby's garden at Halligarth, Unst, on June 23rd, and a flock of 11 at Bridge of Walls on 28th.

"Seldom descends to ground", says the Handbook (i, 94), - but on Fair Isle what else can a Crossbill do? These birds, with their peculiar adaptation to a highly specialised life, have shown themselves to be remarkably successful in adjusting their habits to this strange environment. The popularity of Burrashield is explained by its excellent growth of Juniperus sibirica, the green berries of which are their staple food. The berry is snipped from the plant and the bird, standing upright, shells it with the bill, taking only the kernel. The only two "casualties" we have handled have been very fat. They roost on cliffs, preferably in a geo with a beach below, and with a cornice or crevice to shelter their heads.

129. Spring Migration (1953) at Great Saltee.

ROBERT F. RUTLEDGE.

The island was manned from April 5th to May 18th, during which period 18 observers visited the observatory.

Weather. April. A strong S. wind on 5th veered and became variable for the next two days. From 8th to 10th there was a variable easterly component in the winds, followed by a southerly gale on 11th. The wind then blew from between N.NW. to W.SW. and was moderate to fresh until 17th. On 18th it was blowing fresh from NE. and an easterly component persisted until 23rd. From 23rd to the evening of May 1st there was much variation, often with northerly breezes, but strong on 26th and a gale on the evening of 29th from between SE. and SW.

May. From 2nd to evening of 14th there was a long spell of easterly weather with light or moderate wind, becoming fresh on 12th, then strong on 13th, and terminating with a SE. gale on 14th. The gale continued on 15th and 16th from S.SW., moderating somewhat on 17th and falling away to an easterly breeze next day.

During the whole period the nights were, with few exceptions, clear; the days had blue sky and clouds often with haze and moderate visibility, especially during the long spell of easterly weather. There was no heavy fog and the only really heavy rain accompanied the gale on April 11th and the strong wind of May 13th.

Migration. The following notes are selected from observations on the migrant species seen. The occurrences of a NIGHTINGALE and TAWNY PIPIT added these two birds to the Irish List. Other notable occurrences were a SHORT TOED LARK, GOLDEN ORIOLE, three LESSER WHITE-THROATS and a WOODCHAT SHRIKE.

A study of the weather charts prior to the arrival of these rarities shows how suitable the night of May 9th/10th was for migration in France and how on 10th the wind increased and was easterly on the coasts of Brittany and Cornwall. Birds could have made good flights through France in their 'standard direction' on May 9th/10th but would have drifted to about 30% west of their 'standard direction' on 10th/11th. This weather could well have brought to Saltee birds that were heading for England and elsewhere in western Europe.

During the night of May 11th/12th conditions were such that they might well have brought south European birds to northern France: these, after leaving Brittany in favourable weather during the night of 12th/13th, would have run into a depression with conditions that could have brought them to Saltee by daybreak on 13th.

GADWALL. Anas strepera. A pair, April 20th.

MERLIN. Falco columbarius. Male, April 5th. Male and female, 7th and 8th. Singly on several following days to 20th and on May 2nd.

KESTREL. F. tinnunculus. Singly on seven widely separated dates in April. Female, May 12th to 17th.

CORNCRAKE. Crex crex. Single birds on 5 days from April 22nd to 30th and on 6 days from May 2nd to 12th. Two on May 1st, 3rd & 5th.

GOLDEN PLOVER. Pluvialis apricaria. A bird of the Southern race on April 12th and May 15th. Northern P. a. altifrons appeared on April 23rd, May 15th (2), and May 18th (4). Birds not subspecifically identified were seen flying northwards singly on May 4th and 5th.

TURNSTONE. Arenaria interpres. Passage throughout the period with peaks on April 20th (40), 27th (51), May 6th (41), May 18th (32).

SNIPE. Capella gallinago. About 10 on April 7th, 4 on 9th and 5 on 13th. Otherwise singly or two birds on many days in April.

WHIMBREL. Numenius phaeopus. The first was a single bird on April 9th. Singly April 10th, 12th, 14th and 26th; 2 on 30th; one on May 1st, after which a gradual increase to a peak on 7th (50), followed by a gradual daily decline to 17th (5).

COMMON SANDPIPER. Tringa hypoleucos. First on April 13th. Two on most days from April 18th to 27th, but 5 on 23rd and 4 on 28th-29th. Singly on 6 days from May 1st to 18th.

PURPLE SANDPIPER. Calidris maritima. Three, April 5th; singly 15th and 26th and from May 7th-10th; two, May 13th and 3 on 14th.

DUNLIN. C. alpina. One to four, April 26th to 30th. Two on May 12th and 17th.

TURTI & DOVE. Streptopelia turtur. Singly
April 23rd and 27th. Daily, often the same
birds, May 6th to 14th, with maxima on 6th (6)
and 11th (7).

CUCKOO. Cuculus canorus. Singly, April 19th,
23rd and May 1st and two on May 2nd.

NIGHTJAR. Caprimulgus europaeus. A male
on May 11th.

SWIFT. Apus apus. One, April 19th; daily
May 2nd to 17th in small numbers but only two on
May 4th followed by peak movement May 5th to 7th
with 20-30 daily.

SHORT TILED LARK. Calandrella brachydactyla.
One was clearly identified by R.F.R. and well seen
by others on May 16th. This lark with russet-
brown upper-parts and whitish underparts was
immediately noticeable in flight. On the ground the
chestnut-buff crown, marked with lighter stripes was
seen, also a very slight crest when the feathers were
raised by the wind. There was a pale stripe in
the rear of and possibly extending just above the
eye, but this was not very noticeable. The neck
was less chestnut-buff than the crown. The upper-
parts were richly freckled with brown, buff and
chestnut. The throat was lighter than the
unmarked pale buff breast, and the belly and flanks
were whitish and unmarked. When on the ground the
bird appeared more pipit than lark-like. No marks
were seen on the sides of the neck, perhaps because
in the strong wind the bird kept low. No note was
heard. This is the third record of the species
for Ireland. Full details are in the Observatory's
"Field Record Book".

HIRUNDINES. Passage was much on the same pattern as in other years, but peak numbers were considerably in excess of those of 1951 & 1952. Swallows Hirundo rustica had a main peak of one thousand plus on April 20th. House Martins Delichon urbica peaked on May 7th (20) and 17th (20); few appeared in April. Sand Martins R. riparia peaked on April 20th with two thousand birds, there being one thousand next day and a minor peak of 150 on May 5th.

GOLDEN ORIOLE. Oriolus oriolus. A female was ringed on May 13th.

FIELDFARE. Turdus pilaris. Singly, April 6th and 18th; two on 12th.

SONG THRUSH. T. ericetorum. Singly, April 20th, 22nd, 24th.

REDWING. T. musicus. One was present from May 5th to 8th.

RING OUSEL. T. torquatus. Single females, April 19th, May 3rd and 5th; male and two females, April 20th; male and five females, 21st; two males, three females on 22nd and five birds next day.

WHEATEAR. Oenanthe oenanthe. Fluctuating but usually small numbers almost daily throughout the period. Chief movement April 19th to 21st (34-45 daily).

WHINCHAT. Saxicola rubetra. Single males, April 22nd and May 4th. One or two daily, May 9th to 14th; three on 13th.

RESTART. Phoenicurus phoenicurus. A thin, irregular passage from April 22nd to May 12th: all were females, and the maximum on any day was two birds.

BLACK REDSTART. Ph. ochrurus. Single females on April 7th, 21st and 22nd.

NIGHTINGALE. Luscinia megarhyncha. One ringed on May 11th is the first to be recorded in Ireland.

SEDGE WARBLER. Acrocephalus schoenobaenus. First on April 22nd. Main arrivals were May 5th and 8th with 50 birds each day.

BLACKCAP. Sylvia atricapilla. Female on May 4th and a male on 8th.

GARDEN WARBLER. S. borin. Singly, May 4th, 7th and 9th; two on 5th. One was heard in song.

WHITETHROAT. S. communis. Passage began on April 20th, peaked for that month on 23rd with 100 birds, numbers falling away to four on 29th. In May there were two 'rushes': the first starting on 4th (50) peaked next day (120) and the second was a sudden 'rush' of 500 on 8th followed by negligible numbers to the end of the period.

LESSER WHITETHROAT. S. curruca. Singly on May 5th, 8th and 12th.

WILLOW WARBLER. Phylloscopus trochilus. On April 7th, 90 were on the island, a hundred the following day. Numbers were then negligible until 15th (20) and again until 20th (20).

After a peak of 200 birds on 23rd and 24th, there were none until a single bird on 28th. On May 1st a major peak of 200 followed the presence of three only the previous day. From 5th (100) numbers subsided through twenties and tens to a few from 10th and single birds only on May 17th and 18th.

Some progress was made in the problem of possible Ph. t. acredula passing through Great Saltee (see Bull. no. 7, para. 78, p. 30). Skins were used for comparison with birds trapped and it was clear that we were receiving birds that were referable to acredula. Such birds were taken between May 1st (4) and 8th. Careful notes were made of each. Wing-measurement averaged rather low, being 63 mm. for seven birds with a range of from 62 to 64 mm.

Mr. C.D. Deane of the Belfast Museum was present and able to examine critically some of these birds. It is perhaps worth mentioning that other visitors, unacquainted with the problem, unhesitatingly picked out acredula skins as having resemblance to the captured birds. As in other years many of these acredula-like birds were readily identifiable in the field and in more than one instance a provisional identification was confirmed by capture and comparison.

The first of these acredula was seen on April 30th by R.F.R. On May 1st, the day of the great rush of Ph. trochilus, no less than 15 acredula were identified and of these four were trapped. Others were seen or trapped on May 2nd (1), 3rd (2), 5th (1), and 8th (2). One of the last, when examined, was found to be the best

example yet handled. It was even greyer on the upper-parts than any of the skins; there was very little yellow wash on the inside of the carpalia and at the point the colour was creamy; no yellow at all on tibia, under tail-coverts or flanks, the last having a fulvous wash; eyestripe cream with no trace of yellow.

A study of the weather charts just before May 1st, on which the 15 were seen, shows that from April 27th to 30th winds were fresh and consistently between W. and SW. over France and the British Isles. In the night of April 30th/May 1st rain was falling in Brittany, but it was calm and fine over Cornwall, West Wales and southern Ireland for the first time for three days. It would appear that the host of Ph. trochilus and proportion of acredula had not been drifted westwards in the days immediately previous to May 1st, and that they were probably not to the west of their normal course. Perhaps therefore the acredula that pass through Saltee in spring are on a normal course.

CHIFFCHAFF. Ph. collybita. Passage from April 5th to 24th on all but three days. The numbers rose suddenly from 5 on April 19th to 50 on the following day; on 21st 40; on 22nd, 80, this being the peak. There were 20 on 23rd and 24th, but none for three days following, and thereafter only one to 4 birds to May 9th and occasional single birds to May 18th.

GOLDCREST. Regulus regulus. A female on April 8th and three birds on 20th.

SPOTTED FLYCATCHER. Muscicapa striata. Daily May 5th (1) to 18th (6), with 10 on 14th.

TAWNY PIPIT. Anthus campestris. One on May 11th. This large, slim pipit, which was very confiding, gave R.F.R. and six other observers excellent close-up views. Field-notes were made and are preserved in the "Field Record Book".

The bird was rather wagtail-like in shape, noticeably buffish-grey on the upper parts, which had broad striations. It had a pale eyestripe. The unmarked rump was more buff than the mantle and the breast was pale buff, this being even lighter on the belly. There was a faint speckling on the sides of the breast, but otherwise the underparts were unmarked. For a pipit the bird was noticeably long-legged and it had a rather upright stance. It remained all day in one small field.

MEADOW PIPIT. A. pratensis. Slight movement April 5th-6th and 27th and May 1st.

WHITE WAGTAIL. Motacilla a. alba. Two, May 4th; singly, 11th, 15th, 16th. Alba wagtails not identified subspecifically but probably this form were seen on April 21st (2) and May 14th (2) and singly on April 23rd, May 12th and 17th.

YELLOW WAGTAIL. M. flava flavissima. There were two males on May 4th.

WOODCHAT SHRIKE. Lanius senator. Female ringed on May 13th. It was not found during the following day's gale, but a female seen on 14th was probably the same bird although under adverse conditions the ring was not noticed.

STARLING. Sturnus vulgaris. About 50 daily April 5th to 13th, but none on 11th. A

peak of 70 on April 7th, and some migration from April 17th to 21st. Thereafter stragglers on 4 days of late April and two birds on May 4th.

GREENFINCH. *Chloris chloris*. Singly on April 7th, 8th and 18th.

GOLDFINCH. *Carduelis carduelis*. One on April 7th, 3 next day. Singly, 21st, 27th, 28th and 30th, May 6th and 10th. Two, May 9th and 11th.

LINNET. *C. cannabina*. Intermittent passage in numbers under ten, April 6th to 11th. Biggest numbers April 8th (8) and 15th (6). One which arrived on April 23rd from SE. was caught and ringed and was seen to leave the island on 24th flying NW.

CHAFFINCH. *Fringilla œolebs*. Intermittent passage of one or two from April 5th to 23rd, Two females were present from May 5th to 7th and a pair on 12th.

CORN BUNTING. *Emberiza calandra*. Two on April 19th. One was very tired and was clearly the bird which was found dead a few days later.

YELLOW HAMMER. *E. citrinella*. Female, April 19th to 21st and a male on May 5th.

Throughout the foregoing notes, mention of large numbers of birds implies "circa".

Trapping. 551 birds of 30 species and subspecies were caught, examined and ringed. Willow-warblers headed the totals at 222, then came Whitethroats with 141 and Chiffchaffs with 52.

Acknowledgements. The loan of a series of Willow Warbler skins from the Royal Scottish Museum, by the kindness of Dr. A.C. Stephen, was of the greatest possible assistance in our problem concerning these migrants. Mr. Kenneth Williamson kindly selected the skins suitable for our requirements. Mr. P.W.P. Browne very kindly consulted the relevant weather charts and extracted the information which I have used.

130. Spring Records from Shetland, 1953.

From notes by L.S.V. VENABLES,
JOHN PETERSON & W. KAY.

WHITE-BILLED DIVER. Colymbus adamsii. Wm. Sinclair (First Officer in "Earl of Zetland") saw an adult in summer plumage off Bluemull Sound on two occasions in May.

GARGANEY. Anas querquedula. A male on Loch of Hillwell from May 3rd-16th.

PINTAIL. A. acuta. One or two pairs on most days in Dunrossness between May 3rd - 15th.

SHOVELER. Spatula clypeata. A pair all spring in Dunrossness may have attempted to breed.

SHELDUCK. Tadorna tadorna. There has been an interesting extension of range in Shetland and pairs have bred on Bressay, Yell and Unst. On the last island four ducklings reached the water at Baltasound, and although the first clutch was taken on Yell a pair was seen with 3 young at Hamnavoe on June 26th.

OSPREY. Pandion haliaetus. One at Dale between Lerwick and Scalloway on May 30th roosted on the top of a power-standard and W. and G.T. Kay had excellent views of it at close quarters, illuminated by their car headlights. It was seen on Bressay next day.

KESTREL. Falco tinnunculus. A female at Scousburgh, June 9th-10th.

COOT. Fulica atra. One breeding pair and an unmated bird at Hillwell appears to be the sum total of the Shetland breeding population.

GREATER YELLOWSHANK. Tringa melanoleuca. One at Boddam Voe, Dunrossness, on May 26th-27th, was seen by L.S.V.V., Dr. J.F. Monk and others. A Lesser Yellowshank was at Fair Isle about the same time, - see para. 132.

TEMMINCK'S STINT. Calidris temminckii. One in summer plumage at Loch of Hillwell on June 11th.

SCOPS OWL. Otus scops. One among the ruins at Jarlshof, Sumburgh, on June 6th.

LONG-EARED OWL. Asio otus. One haunted the wooded garden at Halligarth, Baltasound in May and June.

SHORT-EARED OWL. A. flammeus. One at Spiggie on June 13th-14th.

ROOK. Corvus frugilegus. At the new (1952) Kergord colony there were eleven nests and a total of 36-38 birds on April 29th. About 50 had wintered in the area.

JACKDAW. C. monedula. Sixteen in Weisdale, the only Shetland breeding-area, with Rooks and Hoodies on January 10th. One on the cliffs at Noss in late spring.

REDWING. Turdus musicus. Stephen Saxby of Halligarth, Unst, says a singing male was present in the small plantation in 1952, but no nest was found. This year a pair attempted to breed and there were two eggs on June 14th. Unfortunately the nest had come to grief when J.P. and G.T. Kay visited Unst late in the month. Egg-shells of this species were found and preserved.

SONG THRUSH. T. ericetorum. The Lerwick pair (see Bull. no. 10, para. 127) reared two broods and J.P. saw adults feeding fledglings in his garden on April 15th and June 14th.

WHEATEAR. Oenanthe oenanthe. The first seen by J.P. was at Walls on April 12th.

SEDGE WARBLER. Acrocephalus schoenobaenus. One in L.S.V.V.'s garden was singing "against" a Common Whitethroat on May 19th. There was a bird at Sumburgh House on May 22nd.

YELLOW WAGTAIL. Motacilla flava flavissima. One at Hillwell on May 17th.

REED BUNTING. Emberiza schoeniclus. Pair feeding young at Loch Spiggie on June 18th. A male in Spiggie-Brow marsh appears to be unmated.

131. Greenland Wheatears in the North Sea.

KENNETH WILLIAMSON.

David Snow has published an interesting note in Ibis (1953), 95: 376-8 on "The Migration of the Greenland Wheatear", showing that this bird is met with much more frequently in the open ocean in autumn than in spring, when it "seems likely that ... the shortest possible sea-crossing is normally made the birds travelling northwards, largely overland, up through western Europe and the British Isles".

Of the records he found in the literature and plotted on his maps none comes from the North Sea. It is of interest therefore, and supports his thesis, that I captured a female Oenanthe oenanthe leucorrhoea which flew aboard S.S. TRONDHJEM, bound from Leith to Torshavn, at about 1230 hrs. on May 7th 1953. We were then crossing the Moray Firth and our noon position was given as 58 18 N. 1 51 W. This bird had lost its tail: it had the long wing for a female of 101 mm., and although I was not able to weigh it, I have handled hundreds of Wheatears and can confirm that this example was too big and heavy to be the typical race.

A second female came aboard an hour after the first, but this left the ship when I tried to take it and flew low over the waves towards SW. A third female alighted on the fore-deck at 1515 hrs. An hour later, when we were some 20 miles east of Orkney, I released the captive bird which, however, remained with the ship and was still perching on the funnel when we passed North Ronaldshay at dusk.

132. Lesser Yellowshank at Fair Isle.

GEORGE WATERSTON.

On the afternoon of May 31st Dr. J.F. Monk spotted this wader feeding at a pool of water beside the road at Field. It was extremely tame and fed quite happily within a couple of yards of the observers, - Dr. and Mr. Monk, Miss Mary Henderson, Miss Irene Kinnear, and the writer.

When G.W. arrived the wader flew straight towards him with staccato, flicking wing-beats and alighted at some shallow casual water. The first detail noted was the yellow legs. The bird stalked delicately along, holding head and neck very high and upright. It then took flight and towered high, rather like a Green Sandpiper. I noticed that the rump was light in colour in relation to the rest of the bird and that there were bars across the tail-feathers, the tips of which were dark. The bird climbed and uttered a quiet "toodle-oodle" note as it glided on bowed wings before flighting on: it did this two or three times. Eventually it plummeted to the pool where it was originally seen and allowed us all to observe it at very close quarters. It was remarkably tame.

In size it appeared to be about that of a small Reeve and the beautiful marbled patterning on the back was very like a Reeve. The head was noticeably streaked, the streaks continuing down the nape and merging with the mantle patterning: this was of black and buff and brown, and had no traces of red or rust. There appeared to be a darker streak running through the eye. The breast was also finely

streaked, and these streaks appeared to me to end somewhat abruptly, as in the Pectoral Sandpiper. The edges of the folded wings were brown and the flanks and belly white. The bill was long and slender and straight and appeared slightly olive-green at the base. The eye was brown. The bird occasionally bobbed its tail like a Sandpiper, but I did not observe it bobbing its head like a Redshank. Viewed at such close quarters, it was difficult to get a true idea of its comparative size.

From what I could remember of the occasion when I saw a Pectoral Sandpiper at Aberlady this bird was rather similar, especially in the pectinations on the breast. This bird, however, was slimmer and appeared to be longer in the leg; moreover, there was no vestige of reddish or rust-colour and white streaking on the mantle as in the Pectoral Sandpiper. On my return to Edinburgh I carefully examined skins of Lesser Yellowshank Tringa flavipes in the Royal Scottish Museum, and there is no doubt that this is the species we saw on May 31st. There is one previous record for the island, on September 24th, 1910.

133. Lanceolated Warbler at Fair Isle.

This bird was seen and identified by J.A. Stout and James Wilson, both of whom have had previous experience of this and the Grasshopper Warbler. It was found on May 4th, and J.A.S. writes that it was a "dark, streaked warbler with no eyestripe, and the underparts very light and streaked and spotted. Feet a very pale flesh colour". It was first flushed from a drain and was watched later from a distance of no more than 3 - 4 yds. as it perched on a stone dyke.

134. Spring (1953) Notes from Fair Isle.

1953 was the leanest spring season at Fair Isle since the Observatory opened: there were, it is true, a few interesting rarities, but at no time were there the big "rushes" of commoner birds which previous experience has led us to expect. The following "commentary" is compiled from notes kept by JAMES A. STOUT and JAMES WILSON, assisted by JAMES ANDERSON, during the early spring months, and the observations of visitors to the hostel during May and early June.

MARCH. The remnants (77) of a large flock of LAPWINGS which had appeared in late February were last seen on 1st. The returning OYSTER-CATCHERS showed a big increase between 8th and 10th, and TWITES grew in strength from 12th to 15th. About 20 SNOW BUNTINGS appeared on 12th and there was an influx of SKYLARKS on 15th, with more Lapwings and a small movement of BLACKBIRDS.

By 17th the Oyster-catchers had almost doubled to 40 birds, and a few migrants on that day included two STOCKDOVES. More Blackbirds appeared on 18th with the wind light E.S.E. and the GUILLEMOTS returned to their ledges on the Sheep Rock. The first PUFFIN was seen on 23rd when Oyster-catchers numbered at least 60 birds; the first WHITE WAGTAIL came on 30th, and a herd of 13 WHOOPER SWANS passed by on 31st.

APRIL. The first WHEATEAR appeared on 3rd and there was a SPARROW HAWK that day; 11 JACKDAWS came with a light variable wind on 5th, there were 3 ROBINS, and Puffins came to the cliffs. Next day, with the wind between E. and N. and light, there was a small migratory movement from the Skagerrak round to the northern side of a

depression covering the British Isles, and among the species noted were Snow Bunting (35), Wheatear (4), REDWING (19), COMMON GULL (6) and DUNLIN (10). - also one of each of the "alba" wagtails. There was an increase in Puffins and six PONXIES were recorded. A Sparrow-hawk was present on 9th and the following days, and a few BLACK-HEADED GULLS and the first MEADOW PIPIT were noticed on 11th.

WHEATEAR showed a big increase to 20 on 13th with a light E.NE. wind, a dozen Meadow Pipits had arrived, and Puffins were numerous. A flock of 32 BRAMBLINGS appeared on 18th. The Wheatears increased between 19th and 23rd to over 160 birds; GOLDEN PLOVER (7) and YELLOW-HAMMER (2) were new on 20th, and REED BUNTING (2) on 21st. The first SWALLOW was welcomed on 22nd. Meadow Pipits showed increase during 22nd-23rd to over a hundred birds, and a day behind the Swallow came the first SAND MARTIN.

On this day, 23rd, there were also six Jackdaws, 2 Swallows, a SHORT EARED OWL, and 3 CHIFFCHAFFS: the wind was southerly and moderate. Great Skuas numbered 14 on 24th and the first ARCTIC SKUA was seen. Interesting arrivals on 25th were 7 BARNACLE GEESE, and next day, when the first WILLOW WARBLERS appeared, they numbered 12. The 27th, a day of light variable wind, was notable for big increases in Wheatear and Meadow Pipit (which had been fewer since 25th), and the appearance of the first GREENSHANK, REDSTART and LESSER WHITETHROAT.

A big invasion of Turdidae, - FIELDFARE (250), SONG THRUSH (30), REDWING (50) and RING OUSEL (20), - came on 28th, and with them were CARRION CROW (2), REDSTART (3), a HEN HARRIER, CHIFFCHAFF (3) and the first WHINCHAT. Next day, 29th, ten BARNACLE

GEESE arrived and some of the other migrants showed increase, - RING OUSEL to 40, REDSTART to 13, CHIFFCHAFF to 4, - whilst in addition there were Brambling (21), a SISKIN and KESTREL, four COMMON WHITETHROATS, ten ROBINS and some Common Gulls and REDSHANKS. These movements also took place in the easterly airflow of the norther part of a depression then covering Britain, that of the 29th being in advance of an occluded front. The 30th saw some decrease in Turdidae and Bramblings, but additional species were BLACK-HEADED GULL (30), the first TREE PIPITS (4), and first WHIMBRELS.

MAY. The BARNACLES remained at 11 until 5th, when there were 25 birds, declining to 14 on 7th. The Ring Ousels were away by 2nd when nine FIELDFARES arrived, these decreasing to 4 on 4th. A BLACK REDSTART was present on May 1st and there was a male RED-SPOTTED BLUETHROAT, a female Bluethroat being seen next day. These movements seem likely to have been onward passage from the previous "drift", taking place under the calm and clear conditions brought to Britain by an Azorean high. The 3rd-5th with this high well established, saw the arrival of a WRYNECK and a few WHITETHROATS, WILLOW-WARBLEDERS and BRAMBLINGS, with a few Golden Plovers and a Short-eared Owl on 5th. The first CUCKOO was seen on 8th and, with the weather still markedly anticyclonic, a thin passage of birds continued the most interesting arrivals being 4 flavissima and two BLUE-HEADED WAGTAILS on 9th.

There were 4 CORNCRAKES on 14th and next day a small movement occurred - once more in the south-easterly airstream of a depression - involving WHINCHAT (8), REDSTART (3), ORTOLAN, STOCKDOVE, a BLUETHROAT and some WHITETHROATS

of both species. This was also the peak day of WHIMBREL passage, and the beginning of a movement of SEDGE WARBLERS and SWALLOWS: and it was also a movement which, with the expansion of the depression and the development of frontal weather on 15th, reached the FAEROE ISLANDS (see para. 138). Two SANDMARTINS passed on 16th, Swallows increased, and there were more WILLOW WARBLERS (6!) than on any other day in spring. HOUSE MARTINS first appeared on 17th, to be followed on 18th by WOOD PIGEON (4), SWALLOW (15), the first GARDEN WARBLER and two SEDGE WARBLERS, and a PIED FLYCATCHER. The only BLACKCAP seen was a male on 20th, and a COMMON BUZZARD was present from 19th to 26th.

There was more movement, again cyclonic, from 22nd to 24th, with two each of PIED and SPOTTED FLYCATCHERS, a WOODCHAT SHRIKE on 22nd, a male RED-BACKED SHRIKE followed by a female on 23rd-24th, a male BLUE-HEADED WAGTAIL (24th), four SEDGE and two GARDEN WARBLERS, Whitethroats, a few Willow-warblers, TURTLE DOVE, Swallows (30 daily to 24th), some 30 House Martins and a drake SCAUP. There were one or two SWIFTS daily during the last week of May and a QUAIL appeared at the end of the month.

JUNE - JULY. There was a WOOD SANDPIPER on June 1st and one or two SNOW BUNTINGS from 3rd-5th. A Red-backed Shrike was seen on 12th and there was a female on July 1st-2nd. Two wandering flocks of Lapwings appeared in June, 8 on 19th and 10 on 25th; there was a HEN HARRIER on 5th, a Short-eared Owl on July 8th. From June 28th for three days we had a single SANDWICH TERN, the first dated record for the isle, and four drake MALLARD in eclipse and 2 TUFTED drakes on July 1st were unusual records.

135. Tarbatness in April 1953.

DR. IAN D. PENNIE.

Notes on the Autumn Migration at Tarbatness, East Ross-shire, appeared in Bull. no. para. Spring observations were made this year by James Gunn, Ian D. Pennie and Kenneth Williamson on April 19th, and by I.D.P. and K.W. continuously from 22nd to 26th.

The 14th was a fine day with a moderate east wind, an anticyclone centred west of the British Isles extending into the North Sea. There was however no evidence of any "drift" migration. The only passerines seen were either "coasters" (a few Wheatears Oenanthe oenanthe and 3 White wagtails Motacilla a. alba) or presumed residents, although in addition to these a male Brambling Fringilla montifringilla was seen in company with other finches in the Brucefield Plantation. No Goldcrests Regulus regulus were seen or heard in the plantation (there were several in October) and neither Robins Erithacus rubecula nor Stonechats Saxicola torquata in the whins (both plentiful in October).

Some Turnstones Arenaria interpres were noted on the shore, and off-shore about twenty Long-tailed Ducks Clangula hyemalis and about fifty Scoters Melanitta nigra. On the return journey to Golspie a Swallow Hirundo rustica was seen at Ardgay and on the evening of April 21st 5 Swallows and about 12 Sand Martins Riparia riparia appeared at Golspie. (See para. 136).

Observation at Tarbatness was resumed on 22nd at 1500 hrs. Little movement was seen

except for small parties of Meadow Pipits Anthus pratensis and wagtails, several of which were clearly M. a. alba. Wheatears seemed fewer, but one male and one female were almost certainly leucorrhoa. The first Common Sandpiper was seen in the evening.

No new passerines were seen on 23rd, but Sandwich Terns Sterna sandvicensis were noticed, and a magnificent company of about two hundred Long-tailed Ducks, all yodelling together as they flew. These are the only ducks which have a double moult and it was interesting to see drakes in both summer and winter plumages swimming side by side. A male Goldeneye Bucephala clangula and 3 Purple Sandpipers Tringa maritima were also seen, but the Common Scoters had disappeared.

The 24th brought a fresh breeze from the NW. with a succession of violent hail squalls alternating with bright periods. The only new arrival on this bitterly cold day was a Swallow, seen at Bindal Farm, where there was also a huge concentration of over a hundred Corn Buntings Emberiza calandra perching on telephone wires at "individual distances" ranging from about 9 to 18 ins. Much of the day was spent locating nests of the Lapwing Vanellus vanellus of which there were seven in a small area surrounding a muddy pool behind the shore. A Redshank's nest was also found nearby.

Weather conditions on the 25th, were even worse, the squalls being more frequent, some accompanied by rain, some by hail and some by snow. 54 Purple Sandpipers and about 30 Turnstones were counted on the shore. Very few

Long-tailed Ducks were about, and no White Wagtails or Greenland Wheatears, but several Sandwich Terns were seen, and a fine cock Stonechat among the rocks on the NE. side.

A careful count of the Purple Sandpipers on the 26th gave a total of 116 birds along with 65 Turnstones, in a few cases in mixed parties but mostly in separate groups. With the return of calmer weather most of the Long-tailed Ducks, 164 in all, had returned to the point; and Sandwich Terns, including one party of 5 were more in evidence. Two Great Northern Divers, one in winter and one in summer plumage, were seen.

One of the last observations made before leaving on the afternoon of 26th was of 30 Pink-footed Geese Anser Arvensis brachyrhynchus in the barley at Brucefield. They were said to have stayed later than usual this year here and indeed in the whole Dornoch Firth area.

Migrants seen during the five days continuous observation were few and probably Tarbatness is not on one of the spring coastal fly-lines, but is a "drift" migration area only. Most of the spectacular records have been in autumn, e.g. 410 birds killed at the Light on October 18th 1909 and 178 on October 14th 1912. The only outstanding spring record is of a male Subalpine Warbler Sylvia cantillans on May 3rd 1935. It was particularly interesting to note the complete absence of Robins, which were very numerous in October 1952, and the almost complete absence of Stonechats. Likewise, it is now certain that the October Goldcrests were also migrants.

136. Some observations on Spring Migration
in the Kyle of Sutherland.

JOHN E. KING.

From April 13th to 24th 1953 a party of 25 Edinburgh Academy boys and three members of the staff undertook a scientific survey of the Dornoch Firth and Kyle of Sutherland, one section of the party concentrating solely on ornithology.

The expedition was based at Carbisdale Castle Youth Hostel, which stands between 50-100 ft. above the south bank of the Kyle, just north of the Culrain-Invershin railway bridge, a point at which the Kyle runs more sharply NW.-SE. The Castle stands in the western section of Balblair Forrest, above the Strath Oykell road. Between the Castle and this road are fir and pine trees, with rhododendron bushes and also (where clearing has taken place) small shrubs and deciduous trees. Below the road are birch and alder woods sloping down to the marshy ground of the Kyle, which has exposed mud-flats at low tide. It was from the excellent vantage point of the Castle and from the grounds surrounding it that almost all the observations, summarised below, were made.

It had been suggested by Kenneth Williamson that this might be a particularly suitable area from which to observe migratory movements, especially of passerines, for the Kyle of Sutherland narrows here, and the hills are close to the water. Such an area might well prove to be a "bottleneck" for migrants passing through to NW. Scotland or even beyond. Williamson

also made the valuable suggestion that the lines of Loch Shin - Loch More, Glen Cassley, or of the River Oyke - Loch Assynt (all of which run in a NW. direction) might prove to be "flight-lines". The determination of the existence of a migratory concentration or of "flight-lines" thus became one of our main tasks and, as far as daily expeditions farther afield would permit, we endeavoured to the best of our ability to cover this particular area by watches morning and evening throughout our stay.

Despite some very unpromising weather on April 13th, 14th and 15th there was evidence of incoming Wheatears Oenanthe oenanthe; for on the 15th, in three separate areas within a mile of each other, ten cock Wheatears and one hen bird were found. These areas had been searched on 14th and were again searched on 16th, but none was present on either of these occasions. It should be added, however, that snow fell on the hill-tops on 15th and that on the north side of the Kyle there was an unusual movement of Meadow Pipits Anthus pratensis travelling in leisurely fashion down the Kyle, eastwards, feeding as they went. Many hundreds were seen and we interpreted this as a movement to lower, snowless feeding-grounds. The behaviour of the Wheatears, however, did not suggest a parallel with this.

By April 18th the weather had improved considerably and movements of Grey Geese Anser sp. began and were recorded as shown in the Table. Our comments on this series of observations are: firstly, movement began with improving weather and continued until 23rd (our last day); secondly, the passage was not restricted to any one period of the day; thirdly no return to east or SE. was

observed at any time, morning or evening, from Carbisdale; fourthly, movements noted elsewhere than at Carbisdale were always to the west, and geese were seen migrating both north and south of the Kyle; fifthly, movements at Carbisdale were always along the south bank and always in a NW. direction (330 degrees was the approximate course).

Whenever possible, the geese flying NW. over Carbisdale were followed as far as eye and binoculars could see, and the line followed was over the hills between Glen Cassley and Loch Shin. A visit to Scourie on April 18th, along the Loch Shin - Loch More road, gave us no glimpse of geese at a later stage of their flight; but migration had only just begun, and if the observed line was followed, then our road to Scourie lay too far to the east. Our opinion was that almost all the geese were Grey-lag Anser anser, judging by shape, flight and the markedly grey fore-wing.

<u>Date</u>	<u>Time</u>	<u>Place</u>	<u>Numbers</u>	<u>Direction</u>
18.iv.	1230	Carbisdale	40	N.W.
19.iv.	1015	"	2	"
"	1045	"	22	"
"	1200	"	35	"
"	1430	"	18	"
"	1440	"	35	"
20.iv.	1345	Loch Eye	30 plus	West
21.iv.	2030	Carbisdale	40 "	N.W.
22.iv.	0900	"	70 "	"
"	0915	"	120 "	"
"	1015	Spinningdale	40 "	West
"	1100	"	?	"
23.iv.	1030	Carbisdale	40 plus	N.W.

So much for departing migrants. There were arrivals too, which, significantly enough, appeared for the first time on the same day as the grey geese began their exodus. A sandpiper was seen on the 18th morning, and three Common Sandpipers Actitis hypoleucos were identified on the 19th, increasing to four by the 22nd. It was on the 19th too, that the first Sand Martins Riparia riparia arrived, numbers increasing to four by 21st and many on the 22nd. Then, at long last, the first Willow Warbler Phylloscopus trochilus arrived, a single bird on the 21st.

The 22nd was, for us, the climax. By 0930 hrs. five more Willow warblers had been located in the immediate vicinity of the Castle (in an area specially chosen for the purpose of recording build-up in numbers) and in fact anywhere and everywhere we went that day - along the roads and in the woods - Willow Warblers could be seen and heard where before we had found none. The Redstarts Ph. phoenicurus also returned on 22nd, birds being identified at Carbisdale and Spinningdale; and, by the evening, not only had House Martins Delichon urbica reached this area, but with them were many more Sand Martins and Swallows Hirundo rustica. (Single Swallows, however, had been recorded daily). At 2030 hrs. on 22nd all three hirundines were present together in numbers, - a sudden influx. A Tree Pipit Anthus trivialis had arrived overnight at Carbisdale, and a Pied Flycatcher Muscicapa hypoleuca was discovered at Spinningdale.

Of other migrants, it may be worth recording that on two occasions parties of

Fieldfares Turdus pilaris were seen flying NW. past the Castle (April 14th and 16th) and a single Fieldfare was seen a quarter of a mile above the junction of the Rivers Shin and Oykell. Greenshank Tringa nebularia were already present, two pairs being found respectively on the River Oykell and at the mouth of the Spinningdale Burn.

Conclusions. (1) Carbisdale, on the evidence of one visit, shows signs of being a "bottleneck" for geese migrating to their breeding-grounds either from or via the Dornoch Firth. (2) Whether or not the valleys radiating from this area constitute "flight-lines" cannot yet be determined, but the probability exists. (3) No comparable movement of passerines (Turdus sp.) was seen. (4) The configuration of the ground does appear to concentrate at Carbisdale, those summer migrants moving into Straths Oykell, Cassley and Shin.

137. The Taxonomic Status of British Twites.

R. MEINERTZHAGEN and K. WILLIAMSON.

Meinertzhagen (Ibis 1934: 55) described Carduelis flavirostris bensonorum from the Outer Hebrides, as being "darker and not so red above as birds from the mainland of Britain, centres of feathers blacker". After acceptance by the B.O.U. List Committee (Ibis 1934: 633) the race was subsequently suppressed as it was thought to be the same as the form breeding on the mainland of Britain, and this was supposedly distinct from the typical race inhabiting northern Europe. The name Fringilla pipilans Latham, 1787, type-locality "the mountains of the Peak of Derbyshire", was available for

British birds and was therefore adopted by the Committee.

But the comparison which resulted in the rejection of bensonorum was made with "a series from the breeding-quarters on the Yorkshire - Lancashire moors", which suggests breeding-birds, - and in worn plumage the racial differences in this species largely disappear. Later, P.A. Clancey (Bull. B.C.C. 1947: 53) pointed out that inadequacy of the comparison, and supported the separation of bensonorum from the Outer Hebrides.

Recently we re-examined this question using freshly-moulted autumn material. We are unable to detect any difference between Continental birds, including topotypes of Carduelis f. flavirostris, and five examples from "the mountains of the Peak of Derbyshire". Birds in autumn dress from north and west Scotland and Tiree (Inner Hebrides), and also two from Co. Kerry, Eire, are indistinguishable from these and we must conclude that Carduelis f. pipiYans is a synonym of C. f. flavirostris.

A long series of over 30 specimens from North and South Uist and Fair Isle shows a clear difference from the typical race in the more contrasting plumage-pattern of the upper-parts. The feathers have stronger black centres and darker, less rufous, brown edgings; the nape is paler, and the buffish-brown edges of the wing-feathers are paler and more noticeable. In all these birds the black streaking of the mantle plumage is dominant over the brown, but in the typical race the opposite is the case. Twites inhabiting the Outer Hebrides and Fair Isle (and with these Shetland birds in the

Royal Scottish Museum agree) must therefore be distinguished by the name Carduelis f. bensonorum.

Practically the entire breeding-stock leaves Fair Isle in the late autumn, most having gone by mid-November. W.E. Clarke ("Studies in Bird Migration", 2: 108) also noted their scarcity at this season, and recorded returning emigrants on February 28th and March 15th in 1910, whilst other dates are February 24th, 1913 (the day after the big rush of Twites at Pentland Skerries Light) and March 22nd, 1927. Autumn movement ex-Shetland (where, however, many apparently winter) has been seen crossing Sumburgh Roost, and in 1951 arrivals were noted at the Flannans by Alex. Tulloch from the beginning of November.

It is not clear where Shetland and Fair Isle emigrants spend the winter, but the Flannans observations may indicate a movement into the Hebrides. The only recovery of a Twite ringed at Fair Isle was made at Westray (Orkney), some 50 miles S.S.E., on January 31st 1950. A male from South Uist in the Meinertzhagen collection dated October 28th, 1920 is of the typical race and seems likely to be of north Scottish origin or from the Inner Hebrides, whilst one collected in Co. Kerry on October 14th, 1945 has the appearance of bensonorum and may be a migrant from farther north.

There is no evidence among the many specimens in the Whistler Collection and the general collection at the Royal Scottish Museum that there is any passage migration through Fair Isle or Shetland of birds belonging to the typical race.

138. Spring Migration in Faeroe in 1953.

K. WILLIAMSON, NIELS A BOTNI
and JACOB JOENSEN.

In order that a more connected account of the spring migration of 1953 in the Faeroe Islands can be given, the notes kept by the above authors, observing separately, have been combined. The observations of K. Williamson cover the period May 3th to June 5th and are mainly from the Torshavn district of Streymoy and various lakes on other islands, notably Toftavatn (Eysturoy), Storavatn, Sandsvatn and Grothusvatn (Sandoy). Niels a Botni's notes are from the village and its surrounding bøur or cultivated fields on Nolsoy, five miles to the eastward of Torshavn, whilst Jacob Joensen's are from the southern point, Borin, of the same island. These observers are well placed for recording the results of migrational drift, for to the east and south-east Nolsoy faces the open sea, and at its southern end is the most powerful lighthouse in the Danish kingdom. A few notes supplied by Samuel Petersen of Klakksvik, the chief settlement in the north-eastern islands, are also included.

GREAT NORTHERN DIVER. Colymbus immer. A few late winter records at sea off Nolsoy, and 5 birds there on May 18th.

HERON. Ardea cinerea. One is said to have wintered at Kirkjubøur (Streymoy), and one was at Oyndarfjord (Bordoy) on March 19th.

MALLARD. Anas platyrhynchos. Singly or pairs at Nolsoy during most of the winter; 14 on

on January 10th and some migrating northwards on April 28th. At Borin there were several on small pools between April 4th-10th. Two males on moorland pools near Torshavn on May 10th and 26th may have been migrants, but this species is a breeding bird. A pair and odd drake at Toftavatn on May 11th were not there June 1st.

TEAL. Anas crecca. A drake and 2 ducks at a hill-pool on Kirkjuboreyn, May 21st, may have been migrants. A pair (? breeding) at Grothusvatn on May 21st. At Borin, a dozen on April 28th and May 1st declining to 4 on 3rd and one next day were undoubtedly migrants.

GADWAKK, Anas strepera. A pair at Grothusvatn on May 21st underline the first record of this species in the Faeroe Islands.

WIGEON. Anas penelope. Parties of 8 on April 24th and 4 on 30th on Nolsoy. There were 3 pairs and 3 additional ducks at Toftavatn on May 11th but only one drake on June 1st. Some 15 at Grothusvatn on May 21st dispersed to leave 5 pairs swimming on the lake. It may well nest here and at Toftavatn, but summer observations of duck are extremely scanty and the only recent breeding-record refers to a duck leading downy young on Sørvagvatn (Vagar) in 1950.

PINTAIL. Anas acuta. Two at Borin on Feb. 5th, 4 on April 30th, and 2 drakes and a duck on May 9th were doubtless migrants. A pair at Storavatn on May 21st are more likely to have been breeding birds.

SCAUP. Aythya marila. Pair at Nolsoy on May 7th. Drake at Toftavatn on May 11th and

a pair there June 1st. Three drakes and two ducks at Storavatn, May 21st. Female close to Torshavn, in company with Eiders, May 25th-26th and also 30th.

TUFTED DUCK. Aythya fuligula. There is no doubt that this duck has greatly increased as a passage-migrant, probably a reflection of a general increase in the Icelandic population in recent years. There were 9 drakes and 5 ducks on Toftavatn on May 11th and 6 drakes and 3 ducks on June 1st. At Storavatn on May 21st, 2 drakes and a duck were consorting with Scaup, and there was a pair also at Grothusvatn. A female was swimming with Eiders near Torshavn on May 26th and there were 2 pairs at a hill tarn on Velbastadhalsur (Streymoy) on June 3rd.

LONG TAILED DUCK. Clangula hyemalis. Odd birds at sea east of Nolsoy regularly from the end of January. Pair in summer dress, May 15th.

COMMON SCOTER. Melanitta nigra. Five near Nolsoy village on April 30th. A pair in a bay close to Torshavn on May 25th. A drake, and possibly another of this species (but too far off to identify) were on Sandsvatn on May 21st. A pair of Scoter was here in June 1944 (K.W.) and June 1951 (N. a B.), and David Davidsen, a resident of Sand, lake, told K.W. that the black duck have young on the lake in most years in July. It has not previously been recorded as breeding in the Faeroes.

RED-BREASTED MERGANSER. Mergus serrator. Seen at Toftavatn (3 pairs), the Sandoy lakes (4 pairs) and elsewhere, but except for the Eider this is the commonest breeding duck.

GOSLANDER. Mergus merganser. A drake at Toftavatn on June 1st offered a splendid comparison with a nearby drake Merganser. This would appear to be the first Gosander record in the present century.

GREY LAG GOOSE. Anser anser. One at Borin on April 21st and 7 there on 25th: 3 east of the village on 28th were probably from the same lot.

PINK-FOOTED GOOSE. Anser arvensis brachyrhynchus. Six on Nolsoy on May 23rd.

WHOOPEE SWAN. Cygnus cygnus. Single birds or small parties at Nolsoy from April 20th to early May. Hafgrim Rein reported a herd of up to 10 birds at Toftavatn on several days in mid May, the last being 7 on 24th.

MERLIN. Falco columbarius. (? subaesalon). One or two wintered on Nolsoy. Seen singly at Borin on many days in spring, chasing Rock Pipits. Some passage April 5th and again on 25th, and a single bird on May 2nd. Now very rare as a breeding-species.

COOT. Fulica atra. One at Toftavatn, May 11th. An uncommon winter visitor, with only one previous May record. (1874).

GOLDEN PLOVER. Charadrius apricaria. The only flock seen by K.W. was of 13 closely-grouped birds in a wet, peaty valley on Sandoy, on May 21st. Not one of them had the full black front of the Northern C. a. altifrons, to which the majority of Faeroe birds can be assigned, and they presented a marked contrast with breeding-pairs in the vicinity. They may well have been a flock of drift-migrants of the Southern race

in an easterly cyclonic airstream prevailing at this time.

TURNSTONE. Arenaria interpres. Many at Nolsoy the latter half of December and through January, sometimes over 50 birds feeding in the fields. A decrease took place in early February but a small flock remained in the bøur till mid-April. According to Samuel Petersen a big number winters annually at Klakksvik on the sandy shore at the head of the bay, as happens also at the settlements on Vagar island. There were 6 on the shore at Torshavn on May 9th. Two immature birds at the same place on 25th and 31st were joined by an adult next day; three were present on June 2nd and 4 on 4th.

CURLEW. Numenius arquata. Two flocks of 30 birds each passed Borin on March 4th and there had been a small flock in the village area since 1st. A few birds had wintered. There was later passage on April 7th and 24th and single birds at Sandoy May 21st and Nolsoy May 28th.

WHIMBREL. Numenius phaeopus. Many of the best breeding-grounds near Torshavn were very sparsely tenanted until after mid-May. A flock of 6 flew north over Nolsoy on May 19th.

BLACK-TAILED GODWIT. Limosa limosa (? islandica). Five at Nolsoy on May 26th and 27th.

REDSHANK. Tringa totanus (? robusta). At Torshavn singly on May 9th, 26th and 30th. At Nolsoy there were 2 on 19th and at Svinoy one on 28th. There was a flock of 12 at Toftavath on May 11th and 4 others were flying in pairs, but probably all were passage migrants as none

was seen there on June 1st. Samuel Petersen says a passage flock of up to 20 or so birds appears regularly in certain fields near Klakksvik in late April and early May, staying for several days. Two pairs behaved as if breeding at the only known nesting locality, Grothusvatn, on May 21st.

KNOT. Calidris canutus. Two red birds were at Torshavn on June 4th.

DUNLIN and RINGED PLOVER. Calidris alpina and Charadrius hiaticula. Three and two respectively at Sandsvatn, May 21st. Six Dunlins were asleep on a rock near Torshavn on May 30th and a seventh was consorting with a Ringed Plover nearby. There were only 4 on 31st and 2 on June 1st, and on the latter date there were also 6 on the shore of Toftavatn, with a Ringed Plover and a phalarope. The Dunlin was more in evidence on the south Strey moy moors than during the war years.

RED-NECKED PHALAROPE. Phalaropus lobatus. None at Grothusvatn, a regular breeding-place, on May 21st, but in the afternoon 2 were seen swimming among Eiders outside Skopun harbour (Sandoy). There are one or two nesting-pools close to Skopun, so probably these were local birds; if so, they were a week earlier than the first arrivals in the south of Shetland (per T. Henderson). One was flying with 6 Dunlins at Toftavatn on June 1st, and when it suddenly alighted on the water the Dunlins checked their flight, made as if to settle alongside, - and then thought better of it!

GLAUCOUS GULL. Larus hyperboreus. An adult male in summer plumage was obtained at

Nolsoy on May 28th, the first N. a B. has seen there in breeding-dress.

ARCTIC TERN. Sterna macrura. The first arrivals in Nolsoyarfjord, May 19th, were later than usual.

LITTLE AUK. Plautus alle. Many on the sea east of Nolsoy on January 8th, increasing up to 14th.

WOOD PIGEON. Columba palumbus. One feeding in a garden near Torshavn plantation on May 11th was again flushed from the trees on 16th.

SHORT EARED OWL. Asio flammeus. There was one at Borin on May 4th.

SKYLARK. Alauda arvensis. Small flock in Nolsoy fields from April 14th-18th, and about 25 on the Borin hillside on April 22nd.

SWALLOW. Hirundo rustica. Two in Nolsoy village, May 16th-18th. Three were hawking above small pools in Torshavn plantation on the evening of 18th, and one was singing nearby on the morning of 20th. Samuel Petersen saw some at Klakksvik on May 22nd-23rd.

HOUSE MARTIN. Delichon urbica. Several at Borin on May 15th, and a number in the village area on the following day, disappearing on 18th. One near Nolsoy village on 19th. See para. 136.

SAND MARTIN. Riparia riparia. A single bird with Swallows in Torshavn plantation on May 18th provides the third record of this species in the islands.

FIELDFARE. Turdus pilaris. A few on the hillside at Borin, April 13th, and a big movement on May 1st, some remaining till 3rd. In the village area there was a party of 6 from February 19th-22nd and a few small parties between April 29th and May 2nd.

SONG THRUSH. Turdus ericetorum. One from January 6th to March 28th at Nolsoy.

REDWING. Turdus musicus. A few in Nolsoy fields on April 2nd were considered by N.A.B. to be coburni; six roosted in his garden from May 4th-10th. In the latter part of this period the number increased to 23 and on May 7th many were in song in the village area. There was a fairly large flock (? race) on the Borin hillside for a few days from April 22nd, and there was some passage at Klakksvik during the first few days of May. A definite T.m. musicus was seen by K.W. at Borin, May 19th. Only a single pair (coburni) now appears to be nesting in Torshavn plantation.

BLACKBIRD. Turdus merula. Nolsoy village had 3 birds for some time after January 6th. Numbers were at Borin lighthouse on April 22nd and there was a noticeable movement through the village area on 26th.

WHEATEAR. Oenanthe oenanthe. (? Schioleri) First seen at Nolsoy on April 21st and 22nd. A big number arrived on 24th and birds seemed to be very tired. There was a second considerable movement for one day on May 4th.

REDSTART. Phoenicurus phoenicurus. One female at Nolsoy on May 19th.

RED-SPOTTED BLUETHROAT. Luscinia svecica svecica. An adult male seen near Borin on May 16th was obtained next day: it is the second record of this bird for Nolsoy and Faeroe.

GARDEN WARBLER. Sylvia borin. A Nolsoy cat caught one on May 16th.

BLACKCAP. Sylvia atricapilla. Two hens in Nolsoy village, May 19th, and a pair first seen on May 10th stayed until 28th.

COMMON WHITETHROAT. Sylvia communis. Two birds at Nolsoy from May 18th to 22nd.

LESSER WHITETHROAT. Sylvia curruca. Some arrived at Nolsoy during the night of May 15th/16th and 6 remained in and about the village until the evening of 17th. One was singing in Torshavn plantation most of the morning of June 5th (and again 8th) and a second Sylvia sp. was also seen.

WILLOW WARBLER. Phylloscopus trochilus. A few at Nolsoy, May 16th-20th. Two watched by K.W. on 19th, and one near Torshavn on 20th, showed characteristics of the Northern Ph. t. acredula, - brownish, not greenish mantle, and only a slight yellowish streakiness on the breast. (Skins were at hand for reference).

SPOTTED FLYCATCHER. Muscicapa striata. One at Nolsoy on May 17th.

PIED FLYCATCHER. Muscicapa hypoleuca. Abraham Joensen saw one at Borin on May 19th.

HEDGE SPARROW. Prunella modularis. One at Nolsoy on April 7th.

MEADOW PHEasant. Anthus pratensis. First at Nolsoy, April 22nd. Immigration from 24th, dwindling at the end of the month, but small flocks and single birds continued to pass into May.. Two or three birds resting near Torshavn plantation frequently used the trees when commencing or ending their song-flights.

WHITE WAGTAIL. Motacilla a. alba. Small parties at Borin and on the village shore for several days following April 27th. Later lots of 3 to 5 birds, and singles, passed up to May 17th, when a small movement was noted at Borin. There were single birds about Torshavn on most days in May (last seen June 4th), most often at the mouth of the Sanda river and near the plantation. One here, on May 22nd, perched for some time in a spruce tree after a spell of "flycatching" from a nearby boulder.

SISKIN. Carduelis spinus. A female in the trees of a Torshavn garden early on May 19th was well seen and gave a distinctive call-note: it is the first record of this species in Faeroe.

CHAFFINCH. Fringilla coelebs. A pair at Nolsoy village and one at Borin from February 7th to 10th.

BRAMBLING. Fringilla montifringilla. A pair at Nolsoy village from April 4th to 13th.

YELLOW HAMMER. Emberiza citrinella. One was seen by Petersen at Klakksvik on April 13th.

SNOW BUNTING. Plectrophenax nivalis. Odd birds in the village in January and February and a small flock at Borin April 24th, and in the village 29th. Twelve in the village on May 17th.

139. Miscellaneous Migration Notes
From Faeroe.

Samuel Petersen of Klakksvik has mounted two Bitterns, one a Continental Botaurus s. stellaris from Nortoftir (east coast of Bordoy) on January 14th 1951, and the other an American Botaurus s. lentiginosus from Vidareidi (Vidoy) in early November 1952. Salomonsen (Aves, Pt. 64, Zoology of the Faeroes, 1935) gives one record of each subspecies, - European bird at Torshavn on May 14th 1887, and an American at Skopun (Sandoy) in autumn 1930. An interesting fact concerning the new record of the American bird is that it was taken shortly after the series of westerly gales which first caused the phenomenal wreck of Leach's Petrels in Britain and France, and later carried several Nearctic species - including two Yellow-billed Cuckoos and an American Robin - across the North Atlantic. (See Bull. no. 9, paras. 103, 104, and British Birds 46: 218, June 1953).

oOo

Of three mounted specimens of the Water Rail in Niels a Botni's collection an undated one has the dark reddish-brown upper-parts of the Icelandic race Rallus aquaticus hibernans. This is the only form which Salomonsen (op. cit.) was able to admit to the Faeroe List from the five specimens available to him for examination. The two remaining examples, a male and female from Nolsoy on October 28th 1946, have the distinctly more olive coloration above of the Continental bird Rallus a. aquaticus, which should therefore be added to the List as an autumn drift-migrant.

A female Black Redstart Phoenicurus ochrurus gibraltariensis was collected at Nolsoy on November 1st 1952, the sixth for the islands. a 1st-winter bird was trapped at Fair Isle on the following day. There was SE. wind on the south coast of Norway and in northern Denmark during the first few hours of the month, and a complex depression developing between Shetland and Faeroe with a similar air-current on its northern flank.

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Other interesting specimens in this collection are the first Woodlark Lullula arborea to be recorded from the Faeroes, - a female from Nolsoy, October 29th 1950, - and the second Faeroe example of a Pied Wagtail Motacilla alba yarrellii, an adult male from Nolsoy, October 10th 1950.

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There was an unusual passage of House Martins Delichon urbica at Klakksvik on June 9th 1951, five birds being seen. This followed anticyclonic weather in the British area, with a light northerly breeze in the Shetland-Faeroe region in the ridge of a high extending southwards from Greenland. Both Niels a Botni and Samuel Petersen say that House Martins have been commoner and more regular in recent years than formerly. Salomonsen (op. cit.) gives only six occurrences, five being single birds.

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Fair Isle Bird Observatory, July 12th, 1953.

FAIR ISLE BIRD OBSERVATORY

THE WORK OF THE OBSERVATORY

The purpose of the Bird Observatory is to provide facilities for visitors to carry out scientific research on the island, not only in the sphere of ornithology, but in every aspect of Natural History. Work will be mainly concentrated however on ornithology under the supervision of the Director.

TERMS

Full board, including service, is *Six Guineas per Head per week*. Reduced terms are available for parties of students from schools and universities.

APPLICATIONS

Priority in bookings will be given to "Friends of Fair Isle," and to *bona fide* naturalists prepared to take part in the scientific investigations of the station under the leadership of the Director, and to help with such other duties as may be necessary from time to time in connection with the station or hostel. Anyone else wishing to visit the island will be made welcome, provided room is available. Those who are not keen ornithologists are asked to book for the summer months—June, July, and August—so that more accommodation will be available in the spring and autumn for students of bird migration. Application should be made as follows:—

- (1) *If made between 1st April and 31st October.*
To the Director, Fair Isle Bird Observatory,
by Lerwick, Shetland. Telegraphic address:
"Migrant, Fairisle." Telephone: Fair Isle 8.
- (2) *If made between 1st November and 31st March.*
To the Director, Fair Isle Bird Observatory
Trust, 17 India Street, Edinburgh.
Telephone: Edinburgh CENTral 4532.

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